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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES EDUCATION, U.S. STUDIES IN SAO PAULO

SUMMARY

¶1. During his September 26-28 visit to Sao Paulo, Ambassador Sobel held several meetings devoted to cooperation on education. At a lunch hosted by the Consul General with senior representatives of several major Sao Paulo universities, the Ambassador heard various views on Brazilian higher education and discussed ways of fostering cooperation and partnerships between Brazilian universities and the USG, as well as the possibility of forming a U.S. Studies Center. He subsequently met with the international affairs director of one university which is trying to develop such a Center and discussed the initiative in more detail. The Ambassador's meeting with private sector leaders and participation in a USAID project inauguration are reported in septels. END SUMMARY.

LUNCH WITH UNIVERSITY LEADERS

¶2. On September 26, the Ambassador and Mrs. Sobel, accompanied by Consul General, PAO, and PA FSN, had lunch with three university representatives to discuss ideas for possible cooperation between the U.S. Embassy and Brazilian institutions of higher education. The guests were Rector Marcos Macari of Sao Paulo State University (UNESP), Vice-Rector Pedro Ronzelli Junior of Mackenzie University, and Renee Zicman, Coordinator of International Relations at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo (PUC-SP).

¶3. The Ambassador asked about American Studies at different Brazilian universities. The Brazilians replied that Brazilian universities do not have departments and/or professors devoted exclusively to the study of the U.S. UNESP, UNICAMP and PUC/SP have had a joint program for the last few years that gives MA degrees in International Relations. They also mentioned the strong business/economics departments at Fundacao Getulio Vargas (FGV), the University of Sao Paulo, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro's COPPEAD.

¶4. The Ambassador mentioned that he would like to see consular junior officers go out in the field and visit universities, where they could talk to students about U.S. culture, history, politics, and other issues, and take questions from the students about life in the U.S. He also highlighted the importance of having U.S. lecturers, Fulbrighters or others come to Brazilian universities to

promote U.S. studies.

¶5. The possibility of forming a U.S. Studies Center at an institution of higher education was discussed. Several years ago, after arduous work, the Consulate succeeded in establishing a U.S. studies center at the University of Sao Paulo; however, for a variety of reasons, a U.S.-style multi-disciplinary area studies program has not taken hold. A discussion ensued as to where and how a new U.S. studies center might be established. Former Ambassadors Rubens Ricupero, Sergio Amaral and Rubens Barbosa are discussing the possibility of installing a U.S. Studies Center at the Faculdade Armando Alvaro Penteado (FAAP) (see para 8), another prominent private university in Sao Paulo. The Brazilians felt that rather than choosing a university for a home office, a neutral ground should be identified. (NOTE: the Consulate in Sao Paulo has established a U.S.-Brazil Studies Center at the University Center of SENAC, and there is a Fulbright Chair in American Studies at the Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ). END NOTE.)

¶6. Concerning students and student organizations, the Brazilians pointed out that Brazilian university student organizations were much more political than academic, and that if an academic discussion were to be undertaken with students, it would be more prudent to choose outstanding student leaders at different universities rather than working with student organizations.

¶7. Ambassador Sobel noted out that partnerships between public and private institutions was a model that has worked very well for universities in the United States. He also proposed organizing a special International Visitors program for the rectors of the top 6-7 universities in Sao Paulo. The program would give the rectors exposure to a number of premier U.S. universities and would also facilitate student exchanges and other relationships.

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SERGIO AMARAL: AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER

¶8. The Ambassador also met with Sergio Amaral, former Ambassador in London and Paris and current director of International Affairs at FAAP. Amaral outlined the efforts by FAAP, with support from other academic and private sector institutions, to develop an American Studies Center. The Center would invite speakers from the U.S. for monthly lectures and conferences. Current plans are for an organizational meeting in November with an inauguration in 2007. The focus would not be on bilateral relations, but rather on promoting knowledge about how the U.S. works. The Ambassador expressed support and said such a Center could be an excellent resource for major universities in Sao Paulo. He agreed to meet again with Amaral and others involved in the initiative on a future visit; Amaral suggested a lunch at FAAP.

¶9. On other issues, Amaral expressed concern over the prospects for Brazil to keep its GSP benefits. With respect to the election, he said that 10 days ago, President Lula was almost guaranteed a first-round victory, but that the scenario had changed because of the "dossier" scandal. He believes that now the election will go to a second round. Although he anticipated that Lula will retain a strong advantage, he said that many voters are disgruntled by the barrage of scandals and Lula's repeated professions that he knew nothing and was betrayed. Amaral's view is that people are in fact paying attention to the revelations and it may cause some of them to change their votes. If re-elected, Amaral concluded, Lula will be debilitated and will have difficulty working with the PMDB, the centrist party that would most likely be Lula's main coalition partner in Congress.

¶10. This cable was coordinated with Embassy Brasilia, and cleared by Ambassador Sobel.

MCMULLEN